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THE FRUITS AND EFFECTS OF GOD'S LOVE.

BEING THE

SUBSTANCE OF A SERMON

PREACHED AT

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BY S. BARNARD, MINISTER OF THE GOSPEL.

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THE

FRUITS AND EFFECTS OF GOD'S LOVE.

PSALM xlvi. 4.

There is a river; the ſtreams whereof make glad the city of God.——

THIS pſalm begins with an expreſſion of the church's confidence in her God, ſaying, *God is our refuge and ſtrength, a very preſent help in trouble.* From whence we may learn, that the Church in David's time was not without her troubles, but in the midſt thereof, ſhe had a refuge to flee unto, namely God who was alſo her ſtrength to ſupport her, and a very preſent help to deliver her. A ſight and ſenſe of which cauſed her to ſay, *Therefore will we not fear though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midſt of the ſea. Though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, though the mountains ſhake with the ſwelling thereof*---As much as though ſhe had

ſaid; whatever troubles or perplexities may befal us; however alarming and diſtreſſing in their nature; we will not be afraid.

For do we want ſhelter? GOD is our refuge. Are we weak? GOD is our ſtrength. Are we in trouble? GOD is a very preſent help. Do we want comfort? *there is a river, the ſtreams whereof make glad the city of God.*

For the opening of which words let us enquire,

I. What we may underſtand by this *River.*

II. Take notice of the *Streams.* And

III. Of what is ſaid of *them.*

FIRST. By the *River* ſpoken of in our text, ſome have thought that we may underſtand *the Covenant of Grace*; and if ſo, the bleſſings with which it is replete muſt be conſidered as the *ſtreams* thereof.

Others have thought that by the *River* we may underſtand the *Spirit of God*, and if that be admitted, the *ſtreams* thereof are the gifts and graces which the ſinner partakes of when he is quickened by grace.

Others again have thought that it is better to underſtand *Chriſt* by this *River*, and if ſo, the bleſſings which flow from him, muſt be conſidered as the *ſtreams.*

But it ſeems beſt to me to interpret it of *God's*

God's everlaſting love, which may be compared to a *river*, as follows:

1. All *rivers* have a certain *channel of conveyance*. So has the love of God one certain channel (namely Chriſt) through whom it is conveyed to the hearts of his people. And whoever looks for it through any other *channel* can never fail of being diſappointed. For this is the *channel* through which the prophets and apoſtles of old enjoyed it; this is the *channel* through which it flows to the hearts of poor ſinners in this our day; and this is the *only channel* through which it will continue to flow to the hearts of his choſen, even to the lateſt moment of time.

2. Another thing remarkable in a *river* is, that it flows *freely*. So does the love of God to the hearts of his people. And it is well for them that it does ſo flow; for were it not ſo, none of the fallen ſons of Adam could partake thereof, becauſe ſuch is their poverty by nature, that they have nothing in them which is good or valuable to purchaſe it therewith, ſince *the heart is deceitful above all things, and deſperately wicked*; Jer. xvii. 9. Nay, *every imagination of the thoughts of the heart, is only evil continually*. Gen. vi. 5. And to uſe the words of the apoſtle, *In me, that is*

in

in my fleſh (or corrupt nature) *dwells no good thing.* Rom. vii. 18. Therefore we muſt conclude that God's love, like a *river*, flows *freely* to thoſe who are partakers thereof. And that even the *graces* of God's Spirit, which the Chriſtian himſelf is poſſeſſed of, are not the *cauſe*, but the *fruits* and *effects* of God's love to his ſoul.

3. Another thing remarkable in a *river* is, that it flows *conſtantly*. And ſure I am, that no *river* flows more *conſtantly* than the love of God does to thoſe who are the objects thereof. For as it began before time, ſo likewiſe there is not a moment in time in which it does not flow to the perſons of his people. He is ſaid to love them *even when they were dead in ſins*; Eph. ii. 4. 5. and their being quickened by grace, is a manifeſtation thereof. And as he loved them before converſion, ſo alſo he continues to love them after they are converted, for we are told that *he will reſt in his love*, Zeph. iii. 17. and becauſe *with him there is no variableneſs, neither ſhadow of turning*, Jam. i. 17. therefore it is, that he not only loves them before, and while they are paſſing through time, but will continue to love them when time ſhall be no more; agreeable to which it is ſaid, *I have loved*

loved thee with an everlaſting love; therefore with loving kindneſs have I drawn thee. Jer. xxxi. 3. And ſure I am, that no doctrine can be more comfortable to the ſoul of the Chriſtian than that of which I am now ſpeaking, for when *Satan* tempts, or the *world* frowns; when *corruptions* riſe, or *darkneſs* beſets his mind; even then he has this to reſt upon, namely, *the unchangeable love of God.*

This leads me SECONDLY, to take notice of the *ſtreams.*

1. The firſt ſtream of which I ſhall take notice is the *Covenant of Grace,* which took place among the ſacred THREE, even before all worlds, for the ſalvation of the *Elect.* In which the FATHER maintaining the honour of his juſtice, demanded ſatisfaction for the tranſgreſſion of his holy law, having ſaid, *the ſoul that ſins ſhall die.*

The SON being *ſet up from everlaſting,* Prov. viii. 23. as the ſurety of his people engaged to pay that *debt* which they owed to divine juſtice. And to ſhew his willingneſs for ſuch an undertaking ſaid, *Lo, I come to do thy will, O God.* Pſal. xl. 7. And when the *creditor* had received the bond at the *ſurety*'s hand, juſtice had no more demand upon the *priſoners,* but looked to the *ſurety* for the full pay-

payment of their *debt*; and thus *was Jeſus made the ſurety of a better teſtament* or covenant. Heb. vii. 22.

The SPIRIT's office in this covenant engagement, is to make known this matter to the hearts of his people; to make them meet for, and lead them into the poſſeſſion of that *inheritance which is incorruptible and undefiled; and that fadeth not away, reſerved in heaven for them.* 1 Pet. i. 4.

Therefore, ſays the pſalmiſt, *The ſecret of the Lord is with them that fear him, and he will ſhew them his* COVENANT. Pſal. xxv. 14. *He* (ſays Chriſt) *ſhall glorify me, for he ſhall receive of mine, and ſhall ſhew it unto you.* John xvi. 14. And *thou* (ſays David) *ſhalt guide me with thy counſel, and afterward receive me to glory.* Pſal. lxxiii. 24. Now this *covenant* is ſo well ordered, and the bleſſings with which it is replete ſo ſure, that the people of God can never fail of the enjoyment of them.

2. The next ſtream which I ſhall take notice of is *Election*, or the choice of God's people, without which there could have been no certainty of the ſalvation of a ſingle ſoul. But bleſſed be our God that as he has appointed the end (namely, the ſalvation of his people,)

ple,) ſo alſo has he taken every ſtep which was neceſſary to bring that matter about. *I* (ſays the Lord) *will work, and who ſhall let it.* Iſai. xliii. 13. And although this is a doctrine which is much oppoſed by many, yet that there are ſuch a people is very evident from the word of God, *Chriſt* and his *Apoſtles* being judges. If we read Matt. xxiv. 24. we are told *there ſhall ariſe falſe Chriſts and falſe Prophets, and ſhall ſhew great ſigns and wonders; inſomuch that if it were poſſible, they ſhall deceive the very* ELECT, from whence it is evident that there are ſuch a people, as it is alſo from verſe 31. of the ſame chapter, where we are told that *Chriſt ſhall ſend his angels with a great ſound of a trumpet and they ſhall gather together his* ELECT, which they could not do if there were none.

Another paſſage which clearly proves this doctrine, is Luke xviii. 7. where we are told that *God will avenge his own* ELECT *which cry day and night unto him*; from whence we may learn, 1. That God has an *elect* or choſen people. 2. How they are known, namely, *by crying unto him.* And 3. We are told that *he will avenge them*, or take vengeance on their adverſaries.

If theſe paſſages be not ſufficient, read

Rom. viii. 33. where you will find the apoſtle aſking this queſtion, *Who ſhall lay any thing to the charge of* GOD'S ELECT? from which words he not only informs us that God has an *elect* or choſen people, but tells us alſo, that nothing can be laid to their charge to condemn them before him, being cloathed in the righteouſneſs of the Redeemer. Beſide the apoſtle ſpeaks of *knowing our election of God*, 1 Theſ. i. 4. but if there were no *election* it is impoſſible that it ſhould be known either by ourſelves or by any other perſon. (See alſo Col. iii. 12. and 1 Pet. i. 2.)

And leſt any ſhould think that their chuſing Chriſt in effectual calling was the cauſe of their *election*, our Lord informs ſuch, John xv. 16. *Ye have not choſen me, but I have choſen you*; as much as though he had ſaid your chuſing me was not the *cauſe*, but the *effect* of my chuſing you.

And that we might not be at a loſs about the *time* when this choice was made, the apoſtle tells us that it was *from the beginning*. 2 Theſ. ii. 13. which beginning he explains Ephe. i. 4. by informing us, that *we were choſen in Chriſt before the foundation of the world*. Thus hath God ſecured the eternal ſalvation of all his people, and Paul being fully

fully perſuaded of this doctrine, ſays, *I endure all things for the* ELECT'S *ſake, that they may alſo obtain the ſalvation which is in Chriſt Jeſus with eternal glory.* 2 Tim. ii. 10.

3. Another *ſtream* which preſents itſelf to our view, as coming from the above-mentioned river, is *Adoption*; which is a taking thoſe into the relation of *ſons*, and treating them as ſuch, who are not ſo by *nature* or birth. And thus it was with all God's people. They were by nature aliens, but by adopting grace, were by him conſidered as his children and treated as ſuch. But how few there are who have proper conceptions of this act: moſt people imagining, that they are adopted into God's family, upon their *believing*. Whereas the truth is, *faith* has no more hand in the act of *adoption* than it has in the act of *creation*, for *adoption* is an act of God's ſovereign grace, as appears from Ephe. i. 5. *Having predeſtinated us unto the adoption of children by Jeſus Chriſt to himſelf, according to the good pleaſure of his will.*

Beſide, no man can believe in Chriſt with the heart unto righteouſneſs, without being born of God; and to talk of adopting ſuch an one into God's family, is equally as abſurd as it would be for a man to talk of adopting his

own natural ſon: ſince it is a *ſtranger* and not *one's own* by birth upon whom this act of adoption muſt take place, ſo that we are not *adopted* becauſe we *believe*, but we *believe* becauſe we are *adopted*. It is true indeed that the SAINTS *are all the children of God* (manifeſtly) *by faith in Chriſt Jeſus*. Gal. iii. 26. but then it is not their *faith* which makes them children, but what makes them appear to be ſo. Therefore we are told, that *it was expedient that Chriſt ſhould die for the people, and that he ſhould gather together in one the* children of God *that were ſcattered abroad*. John xi. 50. 52. Here we may obſerve, that although they were *ſcattered abroad* and in a ſtate of nature, yet they were the *children of God* (by adoption,) of which their being gathered together in effectual calling was a manifeſt proof, agreeable to which idea the apoſtle ſays, *Becauſe ye are ſons* (by adoption) *God hath ſent forth the ſpirit of his ſon into your hearts, crying Abba Father*. Gal. iv. 6. Therefore my having the ſpirit of Chriſt in my heart does not make me an *adopted ſon*, it only makes me appear to be ſo, and enables me to claim my privilege in calling GOD MY FATHER.

Beſide, in the preceding verſe the apoſtle ſpeaks

ſpeaks of *receiving the adoption*; which clearly proves that *adoption*, as a bleſſing of grace, muſt have an exiſtence before it can be *received* or laid hold on by faith.

4. The next *ſtream* of which we are led to ſpeak, is *pardon of ſin*, and that this proceeds from the ſame river appears from the apoſtle's own words. *Herein is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us, and ſent his ſon to be the propitiation for our ſins.* 1 John iv. 10. For which purpoſe it was that Chriſt took our nature into union with his divine nature. For *when the fulneſs of time was come, he was made of a woman, made under the law to redeem them that were under the law.* Gal. iv. 4. 5. Then it was that he undertook to diſcharge that bond which he had given to his Father for the ſatisfaction of his juſtice and the diſcharge of his people, by fulfilling that promiſe, *Lo, I come to do thy will, O God.* Pſal. xl. 7. 8.

In his life therefore he perfectly fulfilled the law, for *he did no ſin, neither was guile found in his mouth.* 1 Pet. ii. 22. by which mean he wrought out, and brought in EVERLASTING RIGHTEOUSNESS for all his people, Dan. ix. 24.

This righteouſneſs the FATHER *imputes to them*

them without works, (of their own as the cauſe thereof) Rom. iv. 6. and this righteouſneſs it is that the SPIRIT in the work of regeneration applies to their hearts. *(He ſhall receive of mine and ſhall ſhew it unto you.* John xvi. 14.) by which they are enabled to ſay with the prophet, *In the Lord have I righteouſneſs and ſtrength.* Iſai. xlv. 24. But as ſin muſt not go unpuniſhed, and as he had engaged as a *ſurety* to pay his people's *debt,* the *Father* therefore *laid upon him the iniquity of us all;* Iſai. liii. 6. even all the original and all the actual tranſgreſſions of all his people which had been or would be committed by them, even to the end of time; and as the *Father* laid them upon Chriſt ſo alſo he puniſhed him for them, for he hath *once ſuffered for ſins, the juſt for the unjuſt, that he might bring us to God.* 1 Pet. iii. 18. He ſuffered in his character: *He hath a devil and is mad, why hear ye him.* John x. 20. He ſuffered in his ſoul: *my ſoul is exceeding ſorrowful.* Matt. xxvi. 38. He ſuffered in his body: *he was wounded for our tranſgreſſions, he was bruiſed for our iniquities.* Iſai. liii. 5. And becauſe *the wages of ſin is death,* Rom. vi. 23. he ſuffered that alſo, for he *became obedient unto death, even the death of the Croſs.* Phi. ii. 8.

Then

Then and there it was that *the ſword of juſtice* was drawn againſt Chriſt. Zech. xiii. 7. Then and there it was that the *Father* demanded the whole *debt*. Then and there it was that the *ſurety* paid it. Matt. xx. 28. Then and there it was that he cried *it is finiſhed, and gave up the ghoſt*. John xix. 30. Hence we find that *pardon of ſin* alſo as a bleſſing of grace, has its exiſtence, even before we believe; and faith is given us as a hand with which we lay hold of it. So that we are not pardoned becauſe we believe, but *we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveneſs of ſins*; Col. i. 14. and faith is that which brings the knowledge of it to our ſouls.

5. Another *ſtream* of which I ſhall take notice, is *Juſtification*; though ſome perhaps may think it almoſt needleſs for me to ſpeak upon this ſubject, ſeeing that all thoſe who are pardoned, are juſtified.

But as they are two diſtinct acts of grace, it cannot be amiſs (I think) to ſpeak of them as ſuch. For though *pardon* takes away ſin from a ſinner and frees him from puniſhment, it neither gives him a righteouſneſs nor a legal title to everlaſting life; but *juſtification* does both.

Pardon

Pardon lies in the non-imputation of ſin; but *juſtification*, in the imputation of Chriſt's righteouſneſs; *pardon* takes away a man's filthy garments; *juſtification* cloaths him with change of rayment. Zech. iii. 4. So that the act of *juſtification* is a pronouncing a perſon righteous (in the righteouſneſs of Chriſt imputed to him) as though he never had ſinned.

The perſons who are thus juſtified, are all the *elect* of God. Therefore, ſays the apoſtle, *who ſhall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect*. Rom. viii. 33. And if nothing can be laid to the charge of *God's elect* to condemn them before him, then it is evident that *God's elect* as ſuch, muſt be juſtified in his ſight.--- Beſides we are told that there is *no condemnation to them who are in Chriſt Jeſus*. Rom. viii. 1. And if there be no condemnation to ſuch, then all that are in Chriſt Jeſus muſt be juſtified in the ſight of God. It is true that the apoſtle in deſcribing thoſe who are (manifeſtly) in Chriſt, informs us, that they *walk not after the fleſh but after the ſpirit*. Rom. viii. 1. but then, walking after the ſpirit was not that which *put them into Chriſt*, but what made them appear to be in him.

I know indeed that there are ſome who think that the juſtification of God's people was

was not complete till Chriſt *aroſe from the dead*; but if that were true, then all the prophets and good men who died before that time muſt be gone to Hell, or otherwiſe they are taken to Heaven with an *incomplete juſtification*, neither of which can be admitted. It is ſaid indeed that *he was raiſed for our juſtification*, Rom. iv. 25. but then the reſurrection of Chriſt did not procure the juſtification of his people; for that was done by his perfect obedience, but it was for the *teſtification* of it, that it might fully appear that ſin was attoned for, and an *everlaſting righteouſneſs* brought in.

But perhaps ſome will ſay, is it not ſaid that *we are juſtified by faith?* Rom. v. 1.--It is.--But then we ſhould always remember, that *faith* does not bring our bleſſings into exiſtence any more than our *hands* do the things they lay hold on, or our *eyes* the objects which they take in; for were it ſo, faith would be no longer a *creature*, but would become a *creator*. Beſides, faith as an *act* performed by the creature, cannot juſtify, for as ſuch it is a work. Ephe. ii. 9. Nor can faith as a *grace* of the ſpirit; for as ſuch, it is a part of our ſanctification.---But what then ſay you does the apoſtle mean?---I anſwer, after he had been treating at large in the two

foregoing chapters upon the doctrine of juſti-
fication; he begins this with ſaying, *therefor*
being juſtified, (in the righteouſneſs of Chriſt
by faith we have peace with God; *through ou*
Lord Jeſus Chriſt. Therefore, although i
is a truth, that all God's people are juſtifie
before him in the righteouſneſs of Chriſt, ye
they do not enjoy the peace and comfort of i
in their own ſouls till they receive it by faith.

Should any ſay that Abraham's *faith wa*
accounted unto him for righteouſneſs. Rom. iv.
3. The reply is, It was not Abraham's faith
as an *act* performed *by him*, nor was it Abra-
ham's faith as a *grace* wrought *in him*, that wa
his righteouſneſs before God, but it was wha
his faith as a hand laid hold on, namely, the per-
fect and complete righteouſneſs of a dear Re-
deemer. Thus therefore it is that *we are com-*
plete in him. Col. ii. 10.

6. Another *ſtream* which preſents itſelf to
our view, is *Regeneration*, the neceſſity of
which appears from the Apoſtle's words.
The carnal mind is enmity againſt God, for it
is not ſubject to the law of God, neither indeed
can be; *ſo then they that are in the fleſh* (or in
a ſtate of nature) *cannot pleaſe God*. Rom. viii.
7. 8. Therefore, ſays our Lord, *Verily, ve-*
rily, I ſay unto thee, except a man be born
again,

again, he cannot ſee the kingdom of God. John iii. 3.

Now the *ſubjects* of regeneration we find are all the *elect* of God. For thoſe that the apoſtle ſpeaks of as *begotten again to a lively hope,* are firſt deſcribed as ELECT, *according to the foreknowledge of God.* 1 Pet. i. 1. 2. 3. So that they were not *elected,* becauſe they were *regenerated,* but they were *regenerated* becauſe they were *elected.* And becauſe *God had from the beginning choſen his people to ſalvation through ſanctification of the ſpirit;* 2 Theſ. ii. 13. therefore it was that they had *grace given them in Chriſt before the world began.* 2 Tim. i. 9. Now in regeneration God does not *mend* the old corrupt nature, neither does he *change* it, but *implants a new one.* 2 Pet. i. 4. and then it is that the chriſtian's warfare begins; *for the fleſh* (or corrupt nature) *luſteth againſt the ſpirit,* (or new nature,) *and the ſpirit againſt the fleſh, and theſe are contrary the one to the other, ſo that ye cannot do the things that ye would.* Gal. v. 17.

And that it might appear an act in which men are entirely *paſſive,* 'tis expreſs'd by being *quickened;* Eph. ii. 1. for men by nature are *dead in treſpaſſes and ſins;* but in *regeneration* (which is an inſtantaneous act) a principle

of ſpiritual life is implanted, conſiſting of *all the graces of the ſpirit*; in which ſenſe the chriſtian may be ſaid to be *perfect*, as a child may that comes into the world with all his members. From hence it is that he begins to ſee his loſt ſtate and condition, by nature ---the exceeding ſinfulneſs of ſin---his own inability to make ſatisfaction for it---the inſufficiency of his own righteouſneſs, and the need of the blood and righteouſneſs of Chriſt, and of ſalvation by him. From hence it is that he is brought to hate ſin, to love God, and to *worſhip him in ſpirit and in truth*. John iv. 24. And as God hath ordained that his people ſhould walk in *good works*, he creates them anew in Chriſt Jeſus, thereunto *we are his workmanſhip created anew in Chriſt Jeſus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we ſhould walk in them*. Ephe. ii. 10. And all thoſe who are regenerated, have this one reaſon to give for all that they ſay and do for God, namely, *the love of Chriſt conſtraineth us*. 2 Cor. v. 14. And without this principle, all the afflictions and judgments that can befal us, will never lead us to obedience, but leave us *rebels againſt God*. Thus it was with *Pharaoh*, who when the judgments of God were upon him, called for

Moſes

Moſes and *Aaron*, and ſaid, *Intreat the Lord that he may take away this plague from me*; promiſing at the ſame time that he would be obedient and *let the people go*. Exod. viii. 8. And here we have a lively picture of a natural man, who wiſhes more to be delivered from his *puniſhment* than he does from that *ſin* which brought it upon him. *The plague* however was removed; and did he become obedient and perform his promiſe? No; but on the contrary we are told, that *he hardened his heart at this time alſo, neither would he let the people go*. Exod. viii. 32.

And thus it is with many in time of affliction; they will call then for God's ſervants and miniſters to pray for them, promiſing that they will be more obedient for the time to come. But as ſoon as the affliction is removed, they, like *Pharaoh* of old, forget their promiſes, and return again to their former courſe of living. From whence we may learn, that nothing but a principle of *grace* in the *heart* can produce real *obedience* in the *life*; from which principle it is that *we become ſervants to God, have our fruit unto holineſs, and the end everlaſting life*. Rom. vi. 22.

Thus then have we conſidered the *Covenant of Grace, Election, Adoption, Pardon, Juſtification*

ſication, and *Regeneration*, as ſo many *ſtreams* flowing from the river of *God*'s *everlaſting love*.

Proceed we now, THIRDLY, to take notice of what is ſaid of *them*. We are told they *make glad the city of God*; now by this *city* we are to underſtand the *church of God*, which is ſo called in Song iii. 2. 3.

And *Firſt* we have to remark, that every *city* has a *foundation* for its ſupport, and ſo has the church of God. *Therefore thus ſaith the Lord God*; *behold I lay in Zion for a foundation a ſtone, a tried ſtone, a precious corner ſtone, a ſure foundation*: Iſai. xxviii. 16. And that this ſtone is *Chriſt*, appears from what the apoſtle ſays, *Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jeſus Chriſt*. 1 Cor. iii. 11. And that he might appear to his people a *fit* and *proper* foundation, he is called, by the apoſtle, *a Rock*. For *they all drank of that ſpiritual rock that followed them, and that rock was Chriſt*. 1 Cor. x. 4. And he, when ſpeaking to Peter, ſaid, *upon this rock will I build my church*; that is, not upon Peter's *perſon*, nor upon Peter's *faith*, but upon HIMSELF, whom Peter's faith laid hold on. And the church being thus built upon Chriſt, *the gates of Hell ſhall never prevail againſt it*. Matt. xvi. 18. From hence

we

we may learn that Chriſt is a *ſure foundation*; a foundation ſure to endure, and ſure to ſupport and uphold his church.

We may remark, *Secondly*, that a *city* is commonly *walled round* for the defence of its inhabitants: So is the church of God. For *ſalvation will God appoint for walls and bulwarks*. Iſai. xxvi. 1. And *I* (ſays God) *will be unto her* (his church) *a wall of fire round about*. Zech. ii. 5. It appears therefore that God's people are ſafe in the midſt of all their enemies; for who can come againſt them with ſucceſs, when God himſelf is *a wall of fire round about them:* Therefore we are told, that *no weapon that is formed againſt them ſhall proſper*. Iſai. liv. 17.

We may obſerve, *Thirdly*, that in a *city* there are *watchmen* appointed to go about it: So there are in the church of God. *The watchmen that go about the city found me*. Song iii. 3. Now one part of a watchman's buſineſs is to give the alarm in caſe of danger, *I ſays the Lord have made thee a watchman unto the houſe of Iſrael, therefore hear the word at my mouth, and give them warning from me*. Eze. iii. 17. So that if the church be expoſed to danger from errors of any kind, it is the miniſter's buſineſs to give the alarm.

Is

Is *Chriſt*'s *divinity* denied? We have to hear the word at God's mouth and inform you that he is THE MIGHTY GOD, THE EVERLASTING FATHER, Iſai. ix. 6. *the only* POTENTATE, *the* KING *of Kings, and* LORD *of Lords,* 1 Tim. vi. 15. *who is over all,* GOD *bleſſed for ever, Amen.* Rom. ix. 5.

Are you told, that "*Faith grafts you into Chriſt,*" and is part of the xi. of Romans brought to prove it? We have to hear the word at God's mouth, and inform you, *he hath choſen his people in Chriſt before the foundation of the world,* Eph. i. 4. that *they are preſerved in him and called,* Jude i. and that ſuch *die in the Lord and are bleſſed*; Rev. xiv. 13. and alſo that the apoſtle in the xi. of Romans is not ſpeaking of grafting into *Chriſt,* but into the *church of God,* which he there compares to an *olive-tree.* Are you told that *ſalvation* (in whole or in part) is of *works?* We are to inform you from the mouth of God, that *by grace are ye ſaved through faith, and that not of yourſelves, it is the gift of God, not of works, leaſt any man ſhould boaſt.* Ephe. ii. 8. 9.

Are you told that Chriſt's ſheep may periſh after all that he hath done for them? We are to inform you from his own mouth, *they ſhall never*

never periſh, neither ſhall any pluck them out of my hand. John x. 28.

We may obſerve, *Fourthly,* that in all *cities* there is a *chief governor*: So there is in the church of God. *The government ſhall be upon Chriſt's ſhoulder,* Iſai. ix. 6. *who is the only Potentate,* or Governor, 1 Tim. vi. 15. of the *world* in general, and of his *church* in particular. And *laſtly,* as a *city is well ſtored with proviſion*; ſo alſo is the church of God. There is no want of food, *for Chriſt is the bread of life.* John vi. 35. There is no want of *grace* in him, *let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.* Heb. iv. 16. There is no want of *promiſes* in his word, for *there are given unto us exceeding great and precious promiſes.* 2 Pet. i. 4. Nor is there any want of his *ſpirit,* to apply them, for *he ſhall receive of mine and ſhall ſhew it unto you.* John xvi. 14. Nay, the apoſtle ſums up the whole, and ſays, *My God ſhall ſupply all your need, according to his riches in glory, by Chriſt Jeſus.* Phil. iv. 19.

Now this *city* or the church of God, is made glad by theſe *ſtreams,* under the various trials which ſhe meets with. *Firſt,* from a

corrupt nature, for though the chriſtian is the ſubject of the grace of God he is nevertheleſs the ſubject of a corrupt nature, the workings of which will often conſtrain him to ſay with the apoſtle, *O wretched man that I am, who ſhall deliver me from the body of this death.* Rom. vii. 24. But when he is enabled to look out of himſelf to the righteouſneſs of a dear Redeemer, in which he ſtands *juſtified before God*, this ſtream will gladden his heart and make him rejoice, more than the men of the world do, when *their corn and their wine increaſe*. Pſal. iv. 7.

Secondly, theſe *ſtreams* become uſeful to God's people in time of *temptation*; and ſure I am, that no chriſtian is free from the aſſaults of Satan, the adverſary of mankind. The prophet ſpeaks of *his coming in like a flood.* Iſai. lix. 19. And the apoſtle was well acquainted with his *buffetings*, 2 Cor. xii. 7. and informs us for our encouragement, that *God is faithful, who will not ſuffer us to be tempted above that we are able, but will with the temptation alſo make a way to eſcape, that we may be able to bear it.* 1 Cor. x. 13. He informs us likewiſe, that it is no ſin to be tempted; for Chriſt (ſays he) *was in all points*

tempted

tempted like as we are, yet WITHOUT SIN. Heb. iv. 15. Bleſſed be God for that. For it is in this ſpotleſs robe of *Chriſt*'s *righteouſneſs*, in which the believer ſtands as clear *in the ſight of God*, as though he had never ſinned. And ſuch may uſe the language of the apoſtle, and ſay, *who ſhall lay any thing to the charge of God*'s *elect?* it *is God that juſtifieth; who is he that condemneth?* Rom. viii. 33. 34. So that all the temptations with which the chriſtian is beſet can make no alteration in his ſtate before God, nor in that *river, the ſtreams whereof make glad the city of God.*

Thirdly, theſe *ſtreams* will prove refreſhing to God's people, in a time of *darkneſs* and dejection of mind. And that the chriſtian may be in ſuch a ſtate is very evident from Song iii. 1. *By night on my bed I ſought him whom my ſoul loveth*; as it is alſo from the words of Job. *O that I knew where I might find him. Behold*, (ſays he) *I go forward, but he is not there; and backward, but I cannot perceive him; on the left hand where he doth work, but I cannot behold him, he hideth himſelf on the right hand that I cannot ſee him.* Job xxiii. 3, 8, 9. But it is the chriſtian's mercy, that though darkneſs be

uncomfortable, it does not alter the *relation* which ſubſiſts between him and his God. Therefore, ſays the prophet, *who is among you that feareth the Lord; that obeyeth the voice of his ſervant, that walketh in darkneſs and hath no light, let him truſt in the name of the Lord, and ſtay himſelf upon* HIS GOD. Iſai. l. 10. Remember then, you that *fear the Lord*, that God is as much *your God* when you are in darkneſs, as he is when you have a clear ſenſe of your acceptance: For darkneſs of mind makes no alteration in the *covenant of grace*; for that's ordered in all things, and ſure;--- it makes no alteration in your *election*, for that's *according to the good pleaſure of God's will*. Ephe. i. 5. Nor in your *juſtification*, for that centres in the *righteouſneſs of Chriſt*. Rom. v. 19. Nor in your *pardon*, for that centres in the *blood of Chriſt*. 1 John i. 7. Nor yet in that *good work* which is begun in you, *for he that hath begun it will perform it until the day of Jeſus Chriſt*. Phi. i. 6. And a conſideration of this nature will ſometimes refreſh the chriſtian's mind, even in his darkeſt moments.

And,

And, *Laſtly*, Theſe *ſtreams* will ſupport the chriſtian's mind in a time of *ſickneſs*, and in an *hour of death*, when friends fail, and all outward comforts are withdrawn; then having a view of his intereſt in Chriſt, and poſſeſſing the bleſſings which he has procured, he will be enabled to appropriate the apoſtle's words, and ſay, *I know that if my earthly houſe of this tabernacle were diſſolved, I have a building of God, an houſe not made with hands, eternal in the heavens*; 2 Cor. v. 1. or to ſay with David, of old, *My fleſh and my heart faileth, but God is the ſtrength of my heart, and my portion forever*. Pſal. lxxiii. 26.

But what is it that we know of the love of God, of which we have been now ſpeaking? has it been ever manifeſted to our ſouls by his bleſſed ſpirit? Why, (ſay you,) how ſhall I know that?---I anſwer, by the work which he performs. For, *when he is come, he will reprove* (or convince) *of ſin*; the ſin of our *life*, and the ſin of our *nature*, by which we are led to confeſs, with the prodigal, of old, *Father, I have ſinned againſt Heaven, and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy ſon*; Luke xv. 18. 19. and to pray

pray with the publican, *God be merciful to me a ſinner.* Luke xviii. 13.

But as he convinces of *ſin*, ſo alſo he convinces of *righteouſneſs*, and brings the ſinner to acknowledge, that *all his righteouſneſs is as filthy rags*; Iſai. lxiv. 6. leads him to ſee the neceſſity of *Chriſt's righteouſneſs* for his juſtification; and cauſes him to cry unto God for a manifeſtation of his *forgiving love*; and if this be your experience, it is evident that the *Father* hath loved you; that the *Son* hath redeemed you, and that theſe *convictions* are the fruits and effects thereof.

And as the Spirit is engaged to carry on the work which he begins, and reſtore comfort to the awakened ſinner, he leads him to ſee that the *law* is fulfilled, that *juſtice* is ſatisfied, and that *he has redemption through Chriſt's blood; even the forgivneſs of ſin*; Eph. i. 7. at which time the love of God is ſhed abroad in his heart---the guilt of ſin is removed from his conſcience---the fear of death is taken away, and he is enabled to ſay with the apoſtle of old, *For me to live is Chriſt, and to die is gain.* Phil. i. 21.

May

May the Lord grant that *the life which we now live in the flesh, we may live by the faith of the Son of God.* So shall we constantly enjoy the comfort of this truth; *there is a river, the streams whereof make glad the city of God.*

FINIS.

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